



ARQUITECTURA Y PAISAJE

transferencias históricas
retos contemporáneos

VOLUMEN I

A B A D A E D I T O R E S

**ARQUITECTURA
Y PAISAJE**
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retos contemporáneos

VOLUMEN I

LECTURAS

Serie **H.^a del Arte y de la Arquitectura**

DIRECTORES Juan Miguel HERNÁNDEZ LEÓN y Juan CALATRAVA

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Hacer la ciudad

Making the City

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Abstract

Proyectar la ciudad contemporánea significa conectar la ciudad existente, la cual, muchas veces, coincide con la ciudad histórica, y la forma y las necesidades de la ciudad contemporánea. La relación entre la ciudad antigua y el tejido urbano actual se analiza pensando el proyecto de Ungers para el Wallraf-Richartz-Museum (1996-2001) como un paradigma. A través de este edificio, Ungers entiende el significado de la ciudad, diseña lugares y relaciones espaciales. La actitud de Ungers respecto a la historia, a través de los datos arqueológicos y las preexistencias históricas urbanas, se centra en la interpretación de la ciudad como un palimpsesto en el cual la estructura crece capa sobre capa y se desarrolla según un sistema de superposiciones y conflictos. Estos edificios son significativos si se comparan con el contexto arquitectónico actual, marcado por una falta total de interés hacia la ciudad y la historia. Representan un paradigma que considera la relación entre ciudad y arquitectura.

Designing the contemporary city means connecting the existing city, which often coincides with the historical city, and the shape and needs of the current city. The relationship between the ancient city and the contemporary urban fabric is analyzed considering Ungers's project for Wallraf-Richartz-Museum (1996-2001) as a paradigm. Through these buildings, Ungers understands the meaning of the city, designs places and establishes new relationships and spatial organizations. Ungers's attitude towards history, both through archeological data and historical urban pre-existences, is focused on the interpretation of the city as a palimpsest on which its structure grows layer upon layer, and develops according to a system of overlaps and conflicts. This building is significant when compared with the current architectural context, where there is a total absence of interest for the city and history. It represents a paradigm to define a method that considers the relationship between city and design.

Keywords

Ciudad, paisaje urbano, historia, espacio público, palimpsesto
City, urban landscape, history, public space, palimpsest

Oswald Mathias Ungers' interest in urban design can be seen in the numerous competition projects on an urban scale that continuously punctuate the five decades of his career: there are many projects built for public buildings in urban contexts, essays and books dedicated to the study of the city and the urban vision of the contemporary city. Cologne represents a field of research about urban forms, developed through in-depth investigations and design experiments on an urban scale. For the city of Cologne OMU developed fifty-three projects, of which twenty-three competitions and thirty build. Many of these projects, mainly focused on the theme of living, are condensed outside the historical urban core and build real pieces of the city. The project for the Neue Stadt district (1961-63) and the Grünzug Süd (1962-65) are paradigmatic examples of the author's urban vision, based on morphological investigations and experiments. At the same time, the great urban plans for the Euroforum (1992 and 1995) offered an opportunity to experiment with morphological solutions and variations that define complex public urban spaces. Through these important opportunities to build the city, which unfortunately often remained on paper, Ungers experimented and outlined his idea of the city: a city defined through form, transcending functional approaches. Form, and specifically urban form, is explored in its deepest spatial and morphological meanings. Ungers is interested not only in defining the forms of the architectural volumes on the city's ground, but also in the form of the void. The development of urban projects represents an opportunity to design parts of the city that, regardless the functional programme to which they refer, are configured as a *city within the city*. These recognisable urban forms are obtained through assemblages and aggregations of positive and negative forms, of built masses and empty spaces.

In this context, the starting hypothesis of these reflections is that for Ungers, the construction of the urban place is not only carried out through the rich series of large-scale projects, but is also reversed, with the same effectiveness, in more circumscribed projects. The attitude of his architecture to give shape to the urban space can be seen, in fact, also in punctual projects which, thanks to their size, position and configuration, define spatial and urban relations between the empty urban space and the built mass. The Wallraf-Richartz-Museum (1996-2001) in Cologne bears witness to OMU's interest in constructing a building that not only faces the city as a new urban monument, but is capable of generating new spatial relationships and urban hierarchies (fig. 1).

For Ungers, the city is a landscape in which architecture influences the form and quality of collective urban spaces. As he writes, “the arrangement of architectural objects in space can also be interpreted as a stage setting. Placing objects in space is like setting up a stage for different human activities, for the roles of actors, for the life that takes place there. So, every area, every place is transformed into an architectural theatre showing the representation of the individual, if the stage is private, or collective if it is a public stage, i.e., the city”¹. In Cologne, the collective stage is inhabited by a plurality of protagonists. Monuments, urban fabrics, a succession of empty spaces that cross and mark the structure of the city. They are all actors who stage the life of the city, its ancient and complex history. Designing the contemporary city means connecting the existing city, which often coincides

¹ Oswald Mathias Ungers, “Aphorismen zur Architektur”, in *Bauten und Projekte, 1991-1998* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1998), 9-21.

with the historical city, with the forms and needs of the current city. The Wallraf-Richartz-Museum represents a paradigmatic building to reflect on the urban value of design in an urban context strongly characterised by the presence of history and the complexity of the contemporary city. In Wallraf-Richartz Museum the main theme is the recomposition of the urban image through the definition of the space of the Rathausplatz in front of the museum, the completion of the urban block and the relationship with the pre-existing fragments, as the Gürzenich building and the structure of the former Sant Alban's church, damaged by the war. Ungers' work aims to restore form and recognisability of the collective urban memory by inserting an articulated system of architectural elements, autonomous and context-independent. He reinterprets and rewrites the historical text through a new architecture. The relationship between the ancient city and the contemporary urban fabric is one of the founding themes of Oswald Mathias Ungers' architecture, traceable in many buildings designed and realised by the author in different cities and periods.

The following year Ungers had the opportunity to experiment this vision of architecture as a palimpsest by participating in the competition for the design of the Diözesan-Museum (1997), very close to the site of the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum. As stated in the project report, "architecturally, the museum fits perfectly into the logic of the existing buildings, consisting of a fragmented system of isolated architectural elements and bodies and an empty green space"². This structure of the urban fabric is interpreted and completed by the project. The museum is made up of four architectural elements connected in a composition of parts that refers to the Kolumba Kappelle as the fulcrum of the entire system: one recognises the imposing museum block, an individual architectural element placed in isolation; the administrative structure in the Kolumbahof space; the steel and glass roof over the area of the ruins and the existing Kolumba Kappelle. The four elements form an urban system with intermediate spaces, paths and connecting elements. The relationship with the historical material is interpretative: no mimesis or philological reconstruction of history is sought, but the insertion of the archaeological fragment into the image of the city through a dialectical urban relationship with the archaeological ruins is insisted upon. The covering of the ruins is not evocative but consists of a circular plate with a steel and glass structure that follows the contours of the old city walls³. Ungers' project is not based on looking for aesthetic solutions but on an investigation of the essential issues of architecture: city, history and form. The principle of stratification for Ungers is a palimpsest, a parchment on which texts are superimposed, erased and rewritten over each other, building a stratified system of traces.

One of the first design experiences on this theme in Cologne was in 1991, when Ungers drew up a small project for St. Peter's church in Cologne (fig. 2), a building dating back to the early Middle Ages. From the time of its construction to the present day, this church has been subjected to continuous changes, until it has become a system of heterogeneous fragments, completely losing the unitary and homogeneous character it originally had.

² Oswald Mathias Ungers, "Erläuterungsbericht", report for the competition for the Diözesan-Museum in Cologne. Typewritten text in the Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft, Belvederestrasse, Cologne. Translation by the author.

³ Ungers, "Erläuterungsbericht".



Figure 1: Martina D'Alessandro, *Cologne and Walraf-Richartz Museum (in red)*.

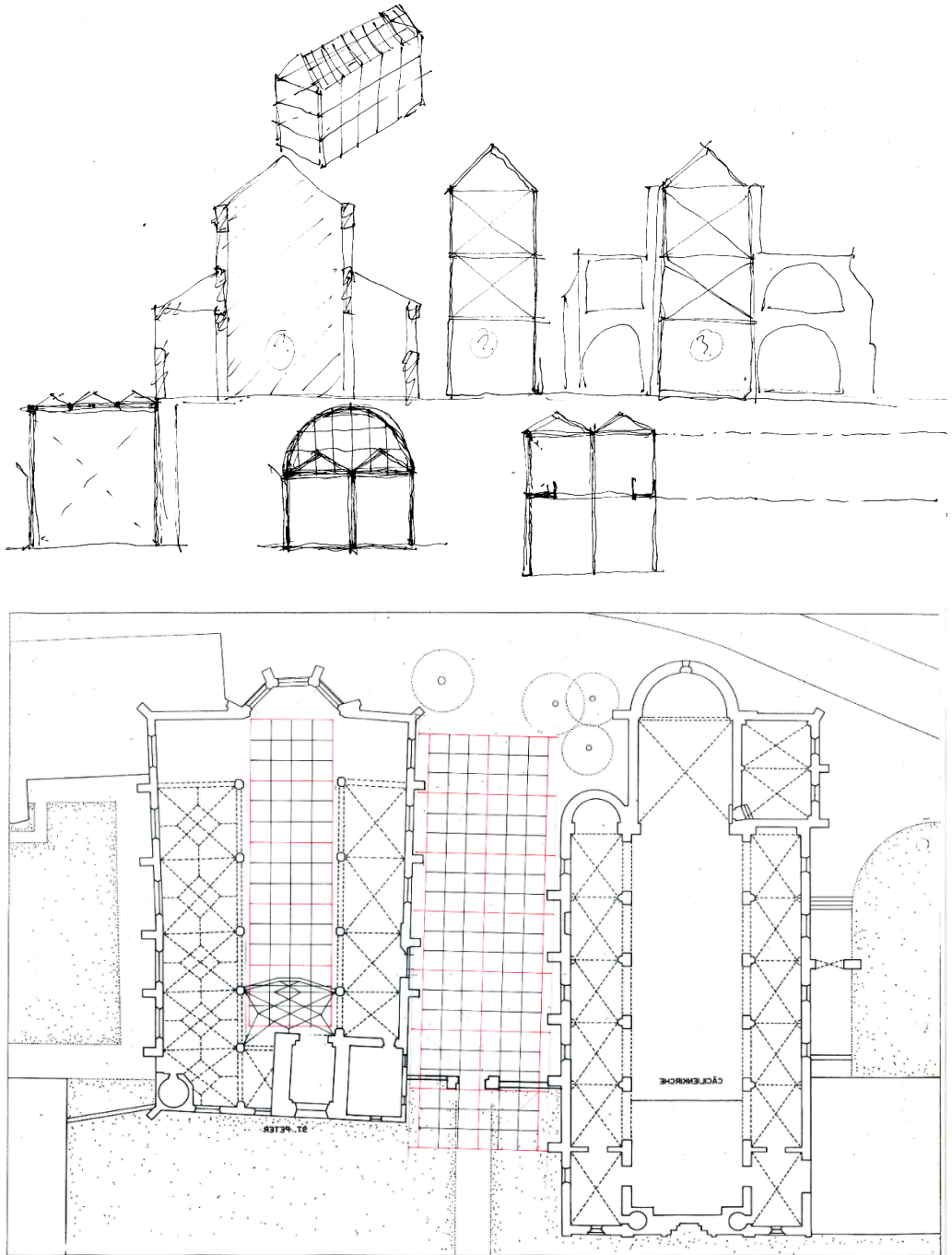


Figure 2: Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Sketch and plan of the project for St. Peter Church in Cologne, 1991* (Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft, Belvederestrasse, Cologne).

Ungers had to deal with the need to preserve the historical elements of the building, with practical and technical problems, without however neglecting the main theme of the project, the relationship with history and the existing buildings. Ungers proposes to insert an autonomous steel construction within the existing structure, whose fragments bear witness to the various phases of development, capable of developing a link between today's fragmentary reality and history, through its proportions, dimensions and form. Through this steel core Ungers promotes the reading of all the changes, variations and small deformations of history⁴.

The project for the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum is therefore not unique in OMU's experiences in historic cities, but may be considered as a paradigmatic building in the way architecture relates to the history of the city, building new spatial and urban relationships. The Wallraf-Richartz Museum⁵ in Cologne completes an urban block with a long historical tradition. The area chosen for the construction of the new museum building is a central area of the city, the oldest and most historically dense. It is located in close proximity to the junction of the *cardo* and *decumanus* of the Roman colony and is close to a number of archaeological sites (fig. 3). The site is part of a system of conspicuous urban spaces along the east-west axis connecting the church of Santa Maria in Kapitol and the Cathedral. The new building is inserted in a complex urban context, in an empty hinge space between three fundamental elements: to the north the Town Hall Square, to the west the urban axis of the Quatermarkt and to the south the historic Gürzenichblock. The Gürzenich block contains some of Cologne's most important historical buildings in a limited space. Next to the grandiose representative building of the Gürzenich, which closes the southern block, there is the church of Sant Alban, which does not occupy the entire depth of the block but contributes, with its front and bell tower, to the rhythm of the urban façade facing the Quatermarkt.

Severely damaged by bombing during World War II, the Gürzenich and Sant Alban's Church were rebuilt by Rudolf Schwarz (1949-55)⁶. Schwarz does not propose reconstructions from scratch or renovations in style: rather, he follows a design procedure which involves recognition of the historical thresholds of the existing buildings to identify their urban and spatial relationships, which are then reposed in the new project through a process of transformation which leaves room for the use of contemporary language.

⁴ Oskar Spital-Frenking, “Oswald Mathias Ungers”, in *Architektur und Denkmal. Entwicklungen, Positionen, Projekte* (Leinfelden-Echterdingen: Verlagsanstalt Alexander Koch, 2000), 76-83.

⁵ The Wallraf-Richartz is one of the oldest and most important museums in Cologne. It was founded at the beginning of the 19th century and has always hosted a very important, extensive and diverse art collection. The building has changed many locations over time. The first building was near a monastery complex in the historical heart of the city. Bombed during the Second World War, the museum was rebuilt on the same site by Rudolf Schwarz. From the mid-1980s the Wallraf-Richartz was moved to the Ludwig Museum near the cathedral. In 1995 the administration decided to separate the collections of the Ludwig Museum and to provide the Wallraf-Richartz with a new independent location. A competition was held in 1996 and Ungers won the first prize.

⁶ The city of Cologne organised a competition for the reconstruction of the Gürzenich in 1949, in which Rudolf Schwarz participated with Josef Bernard, Karl Band and Maria Schwarz.

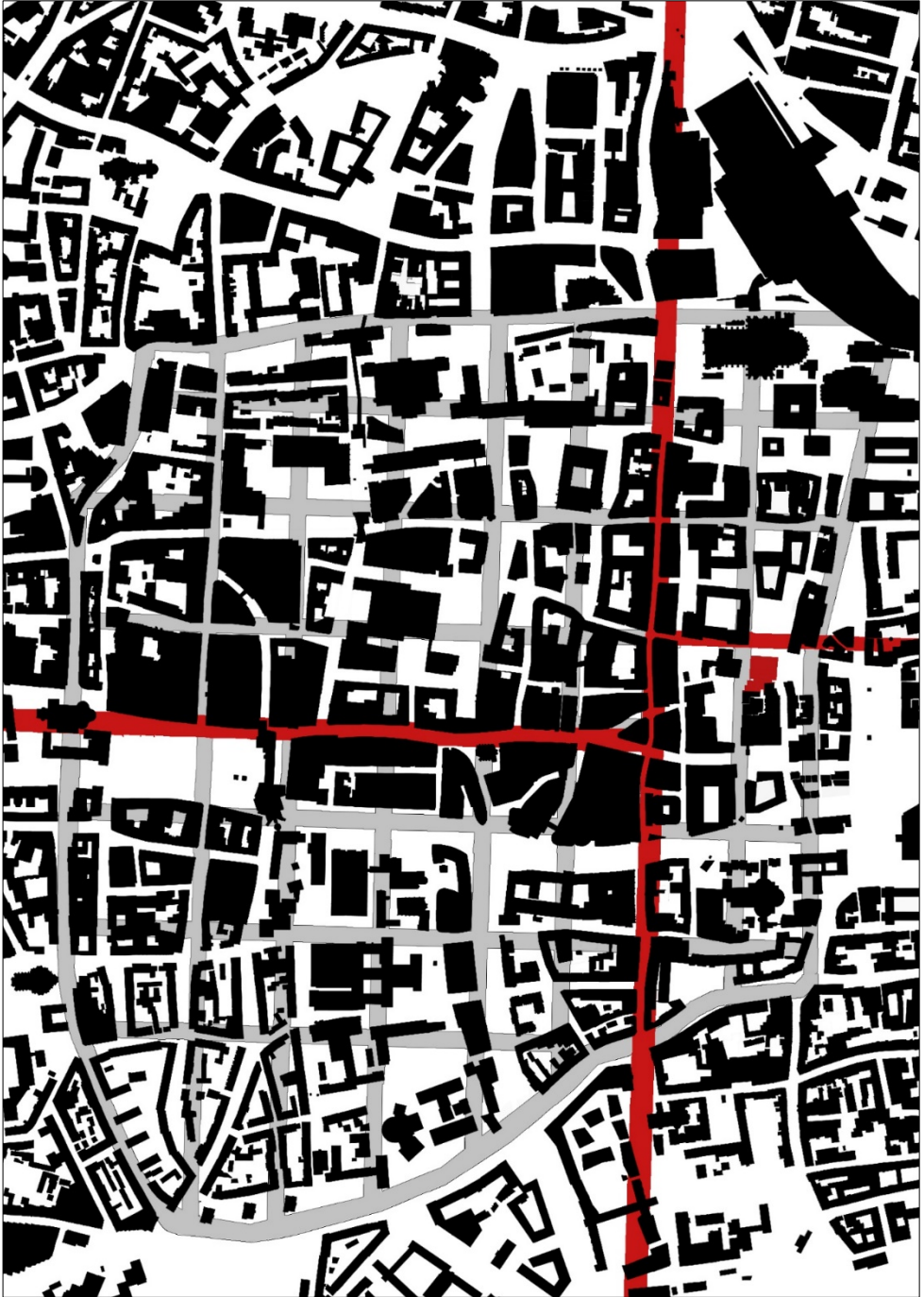


Figure 3: Martina D'Alessandro, *Cologne and Walraf-Richartz Museum: between Roman and contemporary city.*

Before Ungers' intervention, the Rathaus square was made up of a sequence of empty spaces with no urban relationship. The urban situation (fig. 4) with which Ungers was confronted in 1996 was composed of a larger space, facing the Rathaus building, characterised by the presence of car parks and delimited by the Unter Goldschmied road. The urban void was also composed of a further secondary space, developed between the Obenmarspforten and the remains of Sant Alban's church. This space, residual to the fabric, was an empty space, characterised by the presence of a series of huge trees and parking spaces. A sort of tree-lined area that on the one hand exaggerated the already considerable size of the Rathausplatz, and on the other contributed to the dispersed and jagged shape of the public space from the Quatermarkt to the Rathaus. The northern front of Sant Alban's church was defined by a system of trees and a row of on-street parking spaces that made the side of the church a real urban backdrop, despite the important historical and urban value of the building. Ungers' main theme is the relationship with the city and the heterogeneous elements of the adjacent complex. Ungers proposes a building that acts as an extension and completion of the block, while maintaining a formal and functional autonomy. The way in which this building stands in the city responds to a compositional layout that is clear and at the same time subtle. The building does not follow the street alignments nor does it assume a single building layout, but weaves a series of relationships with the main buildings around it. Ungers decides to follow the orientation of the church of Sant Alban to which he attaches the new building. All the churches in Cologne have the same orientation and Sant Alban's church is also arranged in an east-west direction. Ungers' building, made up of clearly recognisable parts, strongly denounces that it belongs to the architecture of the block: it adheres to the traces of the church and aligns with them. This is the only alignment of the project with existing buildings. All the other fronts of the building, while defining precise urban spaces, are not aligned with the surrounding city, but remain parallel and orthogonal to the location of the church. The most evident point of this urban composition coincides with the entrance block on the square, which is not harnessed to any kind of contextual geometry or alignment between the façades, which imposes itself as the new urban setting of the square.

Ungers proposes a building that consists of three distinct architectural parts. The first volume is a block building. It has a regular, massive shape and it defines the surrounding urban void. The square in front of it is in fact an elongated square characterised by the imposing town hall building. Ungers contrasts this with a solid yet quiet façade, which relates to its context by virtue of its position and size⁷. This block building succeeds in restoring character and proportion to the town hall square. The second block of the building consists of a *poché* volume, formed by three slats of the same size as the church bays. The three volumes are arranged on the ground in a staggered manner so that the size of the new built mass and the dimensional relationship with the church are legible. This slippage of the three prismatic volumes also makes it possible to connect the volume of the museum to the rest of the block. The third and last compositional element is the hinge block between the volume on the square and the connecting element adhering to the

⁷ Sara Protasoni, “La nuova sede del Wallraf-Richartz-Museum a Colonia”, *Casabella*, no. 688 (April 2001): 19.

church. This hinge is made by a volume that stands out from the rest of the composition: a completely transparent element made of iron and glass, set back from the adjacent volumes on both the east and west sides.



Figure 4: *Historical aerial photographs Cologne, 1986-88* (Stadt Köln Geoportal).

This node evokes the memory of an ancient road from the Middle Ages, which Ungers wanted to bring back to life⁸.

Looking at the preparatory sketches for the project, it is immediately clear that the way the building stands in the city is the main theme of the project, or at least it is an aspect that the architect investigated carefully. Despite the fact that all the project sketches⁹ confirm the general layout of the project which was then built, the archive material, which testifies the architect's design method, not concentrated on a single design strategy but on the possible architectural alternatives offered by the project theme, it shows the various attempts to design a system of alignments between the volumes and the existing city. From the drawings we can trace the design genesis of the composition: the in-depth investigation carried out on the system of attachment to the ruins of the church and to the ancient tracks reveals all the precision by which Ungers intends to structure the relationship with history. From this series of sketches, we can read how Ungers questioned the correct character and role to attribute to the route of the ancient medieval road: the route of the road is at times marked as a true passageway that cuts through and separates the volumes of the building. What emerges clearly is the insistence of the research on the arrangement of the volumes on the ground and on finding the right proportion between the parts.

The main block on the square is defined by the entrance foyer and the ticket and bookshop services on the ground floor, while the museum's exhibition itinerary develops on the upper floors. The three vertical parallelepipeds on the Quatermarkt contain all the service apparatus with offices, while the glass volume houses the lift system connecting all the floors of the building. As can be seen from the plan, the ground floor of the block on the square emphasises the urban character of the museum (fig. 5). Ungers does not model this space as a massive basement, closed and introverted, like the rest of the building volume. On the contrary, he designs the urban plane as a large hypostyle hall, a pillared space that welcomes the city inside, defining a covered square as a filter between the square and the art collection.

The urban nature of the ground attack is also underlined by the choice of materials: the museum, a massive volume of exposed tuff, presents the only exceptional choice in the cladding of the ground floor, both on the façade and inside. Black stones underline the compositional gesture of emphasising the urban and public vocation of the entire ground floor. The typological reference matrix is that of the *broletto*, a public building characterised by a large, deep portico on the ground floor, a covered space but open to the city. In this way Ungers not only defines a new boundary and a new dimension for the square in front of the museum, but amplifies the echo of the surrounding urban space. The ground floor of the building brings together the spatial qualities of the Rathausplatz, the Quatermarkt and the museum in an architectural hinge, creating a new dialogue between urban voids. Looking at it in relation to the rest of the city, it looks like a pivot. This design gesture, so accomplished and calibrated, implies a complex system of relations with the rest of the

⁸ Rita Capezzuto, “The architecture of silence. A new museum in Cologne shows Oswald Mathias Ungers at his most austere”, *Domus*, no. 837 (May 2001): 78-95.

⁹ The drawings are kept in the Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft, Belvederestrasse, Cologne.

urban system. As well as revealing new spatial relationships between the elements characterising the project area, the building is a central point of connection defining a long route on an urban scale in which the city displays its history and cultural identity.

The main volume of the museum, due to its position, size and shape, is in fact an important hinge in the route that links together the different places and monuments. It has the capacity to propose a dialogue between elements which did not exist before, recomposing the urban fabric through a long red thread which runs through the entire city, crossing it and linking all the individual elements in a new order.

The Wallraf-Richartz Museum seems to anticipate the concept of general urban requalification of the area which Ungers proposed to the city only three years after winning the competition for the museum.

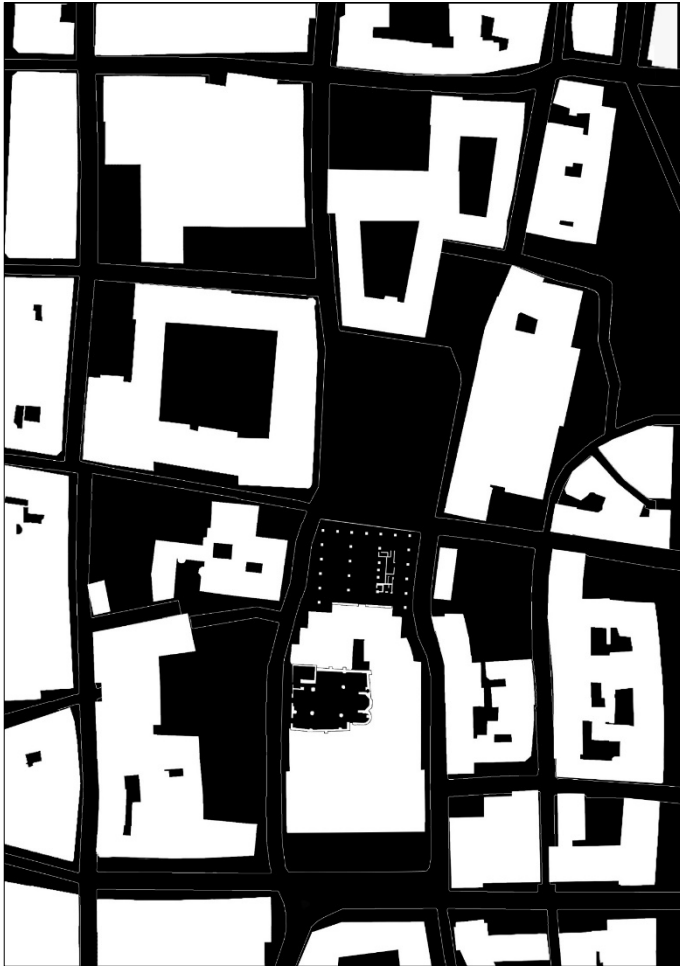


Figure 5: Martina D'Alessandro, *Wallraf-Richartz Museum: urban ground*.

This idea of the city as a museum was to be further developed by Ungers in 1999, when he proposed the idea of inserting an organisation of public and representative spaces in the historic centre into the urban fabric of Cologne, designing a network of routes and spatial sequences capable of concentrating and summarising all the cultural wealth of the city and its museums in a precise urban area. The vision of the city as a museum, called *Via Culturalis*¹⁰, displays the significant places in the centre of Cologne in a precise spatial sequence, stringing together the emerging urban elements one after the other, like a *pearl necklace* (fig. 6).

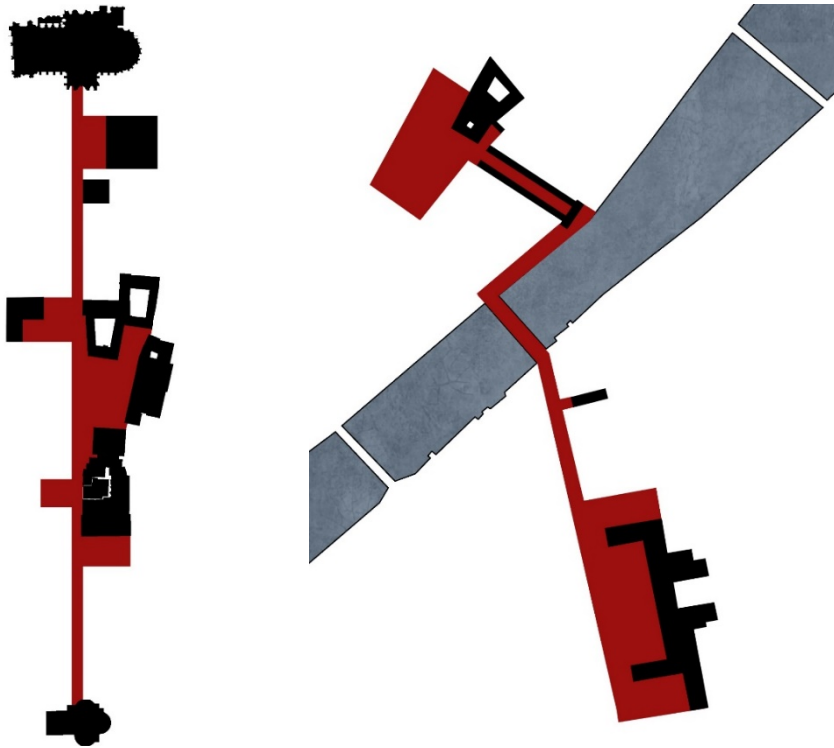


Figure 6: Martina D'Alessandro, *Museum as city - city as museum: Via Culturalis, Cologne.*

Figure 7: Martina D'Alessandro, *Museum as city - city as museum: Uffizi, Florence.*

The new identity sought by Ungers consists precisely in the ability of this cultural axis in the heart of Cologne to inscribe monuments, spaces and different places in a single, unified system, maintaining and enhancing the specific and individual roles of each element. The project of this pedestrian route in the culture of Cologne finds its most relevant value in the possibility it offers to the city to discover, to become aware and even to be able to walk

¹⁰ Ulrich Krings, *Via Culturalis. Eine zentrale Kultur-Achse in Köln zu Fuß* (Cologne: J. P. Bachem Verlag, 2004).

among the traces on which Cologne has been built in time: along the straight axis the route starts from the Cologne Cathedral and arrives to the Church of Santa Maria im Kapitol, connecting the most important historical monuments and the modern and contemporary museums of the city. A route, therefore, along which the city shows the process of transformation to which it is subjected, step by step, explaining the individual elements that constitute it.

In the pursuit of the idea of museum as city, or city as museum, Ungers refers to a historical example that was realised on the basis of this approach, namely the Uffizi museum in Florence (fig. 7), which defines a new order of urban space derived from a route that connects the network of individual architectural elements. About the urban system of the Uffizi, Ungers writes: "The route is an artistic fabric that is crossed by a long thread that runs through it and carries the whole weight of Renaissance thought. It is the great axis that runs through everything, that binds all the individual elements, holds them together, orders them and gives them an incomparable security that penetrates the fabric of the city. It crosses all the buildings, passes over them, crosses the river, jumps over it, goes up and down, turns and turns again and chains together old and new, valuable and worthless elements, landscape and city, built and natural, pole and antipode and places everything in one continuous movement"¹¹.

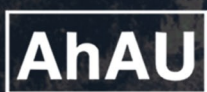
With the *Via Culturalis* project in Cologne Ungers achieves a similar system, in which the covered square at the entrance to the museum completes the urban exhibition fabric, between monuments and places of the city's history. In this vision of an exhibition route on an urban scale, the Wallraf-Richartz Museum is a central connecting node along the axis connecting the Cathedral and the church of Santa Maria in Kapitol. In this system, the street is transformed into: "[...] an educational landscape by inserting pieces of the memory of antiquity and examples of different cultures and historical epochs into the landscape, turning it into an archipelago of architectural events. These set-pieces from various historical epochs projected the past into the future, relating the present to a continuum of collective memories. Each architectural island recalls images of the past and enriches the mind of the viewer stimulating new explorations and inspiring his visionary imagination"¹². Through this view of the city and its history, Ungers' true intention is revealed: a general urban design that systemises and makes legible the different fragments of the city's history, transforming the city from an archipelago of separate and autonomous monuments into an interconnected urban landscape, an actual museum on urban scale.

¹¹ Oswald Mathias Ungers, "Oswald Mathias Ungers. Architekturlehre. Berliner Vorlesungen 1964-65. Vorlesung 2, Wintersemester 1964/65. Mehrräumige Gebilde in eindeutiger Zusammensetzung", *Archplus*, no. 179 (July 2006): 96-97. Translation by the author.

¹² Oswald Mathias Ungers, "Architecture of the Collective Memory. The Infinite Catalogue of Urban Forms", *Lotus International*, no. 24 (1979): 9.

El paisaje es hoy un tema crucial en el debate arquitectónico, urbanístico, artístico, territorial, político, ecológico y antropológico. En la pregunta sobre qué es un paisaje se entrecruzan muchas de las grandes cuestiones que tienen que ver con la construcción y con la percepción de nuestro entorno, en un momento determinado por una crisis global que convierte a la mirada sobre nuestro hábitat en un asunto marcado por la urgencia. La centralidad del paisaje en la cultura contemporánea es un fenómeno tan reconocido que ha dado lugar a elaboraciones teóricas específicas tendentes a dar cuenta del mismo. Está claro que hoy las cuestiones relacionadas con el paisaje, en su sentido más amplio, constituyen uno de los núcleos conceptuales en los que en mayor medida se entrecruzan naturaleza, cultura, historia y contemporaneidad.

La complejidad y variedad de temas que el paisaje convoca solo puede abordarse desde una mirada transversal y desde la complementariedad de diferentes saberes y disciplinas. Tal fue el objetivo que se propuso el Congreso Internacional *Arquitectura y paisaje: transferencias históricas, retos contemporáneos*, celebrado en Granada del 26 al 28 de enero de 2022, cuyas aportaciones se recogen en el presente volumen.



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